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177 Thonga boys are so fond of games that they even try to imitate those of the Europeans. In the accompanying illustration, they are seen sitting in two rows throwing some projectiles along the ground. I wondered what game this was, and was informed that these boys, having seen Portuguese officials playing billiards at the camp, had attempted to do the same, and this was the result!

C. THE AGE OF PUBERTY

I. *Circumcision rites.*

1) SPREAD AND ORIGIN OF CIRCUMCISION AMONGST THE THONGAS.

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866 As he grows up, the Thonga boy leaves the flock of goats and is entrusted with the care of the big cattle, oxen and cows, when his father owns any. He becomes very proud, and tyrannises over his younger brothers; he calls himself their "hosi," their chief, and sends them to work for him; in Maputju, big boys went so far as to scorn water brought from the pool by women, and only to use water specially fetched by small boys. If they grow so important in their own eyes, the reason is that special rites are performed on them during this period, rites which are calculated to give them great self-confidence. Amongst these rites, some have a direct relation with the sexual life and some represent only the entrance upon manhood. Let us begin with a study of circumcision, then we will take the other puberty rites and the habit of *gangisa*.

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304 In a great many Bantu tribes, the age of puberty is marked by ceremonies of initiation, often accompanied by circumcision. There is little doubt that circumcision was practised throughout the Thonga tribes in former times. It is still current with those Thongas who emigrated into the Transvaal, and this is not a custom borrowed from the Pedi clans, which have all preserved circumcision. Though the Thongas often receive initiation in Pedi schools, in the Spelonken, they possess their own schools

3) THE GANGISA.

832 When a boy has gone through the puberty rites, he is grown
 836 up and is allowed to practise the *gangisa*. This word comes
 882 from *ganga*, which means "to choose a lover." Each girl is
 asked by the boys to choose one of them; they *make them choose*
 (*gangisa*, factitive derivative). I once observed some boys—they
 were still very young—flirting round three or four girls just like
 bees round ripe plums, running after them, and saying repeatedly :
 "Choose me! Choose me!" There is a special blue cotton print
 with a large white pattern which is called "*gangisa ntombi*" viz.
 836 to make a girl choose, as it is offered by the lover to the damsel of
 848 her choice, her boy plays with her like husband and wife, first
 884 building little huts, etc. but later on in a less platonic fashion. In
 fact nothing is prohibited in the relations between young people
 of the two sexes. A married woman is sacred amongst the Thongas,
 [837] but an unmarried girl is not. However, she must not become
 pregnant. (1) If this happens, the parents will say to the lover :
 "You have spoiled our daughter, you must buy her in marriage."
 If he refuses, the child will belong to the family of the girl.
 Excesses in *gangisa* are condemned. A boy who commits them
 is said to be an adulterer (*a ni bupse*); of a girl they say : "She
 will lose her head (*a ta ba singe*)."

882 As the unmarried boys and girls live in special huts, the *lao*
 836 of the boys and the *nhanga* of the girls, at the entrance of the
 village, it is easy for them to meet during the night. During
 the day, they generally behave themselves becomingly. But when
 the lads pay visits to their girls, who sing to the accompaniment

(1) When a girl becomes pregnant, having had relations with her lover inside her parents' village, it is very serious; it is taboo. The boy will have to find a goat, to kill it during the night in the girl's kraal, and to rise very early; then both the boy and the girl, quite naked, must go round the village and sprinkle the fence from inside with a special decoction. None must come out of the huts to look at them. This will prevent the inhabitants from contracting the disease called *rukuhlwane* (cough, lung complaint) which would otherwise attack them. Moreover the guilty boy will have to pay a fine of 2.5 in case of the cure of the taboo.